

FEATURE

Med group laboratory receives accreditation

By Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe
437 AW Public Affairs

The 437th Medical Group Laboratory has been awarded an accreditation by the Commission on Laboratory Accreditation of the College of American Pathologists, based on the results of a recent on-site inspection. The lab is now one of the more than 6,000 CAP-accredited laboratories nationwide.

"It's a huge accomplishment," said Capt. David Lincoln, officer-in-charge of the lab. "It puts us on par with our civilian counterparts. It basically is a stamp of approval that we're meeting the highest quality standards possible, military or civilian."

The lab provides medical support for active duty members and their families. It is also partnered with the Air Force Drug Abuse Prevention Program by providing urinalysis testing. It is accredited in bacteriology, chemistry and hematology.

The lab supports mobility processing and provides HIV testing. They're also on call 24 hours a day for aircraft

mishaps or other incidents on base, such as suspected cases of drunk driving.

Its wartime mission is collecting, processing and shipping blood products to the theater of operations, according to Lincoln. Staff members train for contingencies and are subject to temporary duty assignments at any time.

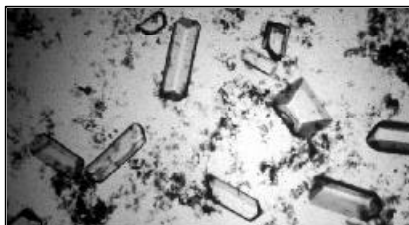
"The newest and most exciting area of contingency operation is identification of biological weapons of mass destruction, such as anthrax or plague" by a biological assessment team, Lincoln said. "We're all going to be trained in using the latest technology to identify in theater weapons of mass destruction based on biological organisms. We funnel that information stateside for analysis and confirmation. It's a pretty quick process, usually a few hours."

If it is confirmed that a biological weapon was used, that information is immediately passed on to the in-theater commander.

"That's a critical role we never had," Lincoln said.



Above, Staff Sgt. Tim Tarrant, a lab technician, views a sample (left) under a microscope.



photos by Staff Sgt. Andy Rodier



A blood sample is taken from a container.



At left, Tarrant checks petri dishes stored in a refrigerator.



Below, blood is drawn from a patient for an HIV test.